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118 HOUSE MEMBERS RAISE CONCERN OVER EAST TIMOR

WASHINGTON—A bipartisan group of 118 House members, led by Rep. Tony P. Hall (D-Ohio), asked President George Bush to raise human rights concerns in East Timor when he meets Indonesian President Suharto in Washington on June 9.

"Our concern is that failure to mention the situation in East Timor during your meeting with President Suharto would signal a lack of United States attention to the serious human rights and humanitarian issues in that troubled territory," the lawmakers told Bush in a letter.

East Timor, a predominantly Roman Catholic territory and former Portuguese colony, was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and forcibly annexed the following year. More than 100,000 out of a pre-occupation population of 700,000 perished in East Timor stemming from the Indonesian invasion and subsequent military operations. The invasion was carried out largely with equipment supplied by the United States.

Citing Catholic Church sources, the letter says, "Severe violations of human rights, including executions, rape and beatings, are a recurring problem. Armed conflict persists in the territory, as does tight Indonesian military control over East Timor's population."

"The United States should firmly support the continued presence in East Timor of international humanitarian organizations, as well as the efforts of human rights groups to obtain unrestricted access to the territory," the lawmakers wrote.

The House members also drew attention to a recent request by East Timor's Catholic Bishop, who called for a referendum on the future of the territory that might end the bloody 14-year old conflict. Hall noted that Indonesia's minister of security had recently characterized the Bishop's request, communicated to UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, as "unpatriotic."

President Suharto visited the United States to receive a 1989 United Nations Population Award on June 8. In their letter to Bush, the lawmakers say that "concern has been raised about Indonesia's birth control activities in East Timor in view of the large-scale loss of population there."

Hall said, "The fact that Suharto is receiving this award is somewhat strange, even Orwellian, considering East Timor's huge loss of population through violent means. I question the nature of any population control program carried out by the invaders themselves."

The text of the letter follows:

Dear Mr. President:

For many years, United States Representatives and Senators have been concerned about conditions in the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, a predominantly Roman Catholic territory which was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and forcibly annexed. At this time, we write specifically to request that you discuss the issue of East Timor when you meet with Indonesian President Suharto in June.

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ADD ONE
EAST TIMOR

We appreciate that the Reagan Administration raised human rights and humanitarian issues regarding East Timor on an ongoing basis with top Indonesian officials. We urge your Administration to continue to address these concerns with the Government of Indonesia.

We are aware that some improvements have occurred in East Timor in recent years. We also note that on January 1, 1989, the Indonesians declared the island officially "opened," which suggested that travel restrictions regarding East Timor would be lifted after 14 years of tightly controlled access. Nevertheless, several journalists and Western parliamentarians who have visited East Timor since this "opening" have reported that they were inhibited in their contact with the Timorese. Further, reports from authoritative Catholic Church sources, as cited, for example, in *The New York* Times of January 22, 1989, make it clear that severe violations of human rights, including executions, rape, and beatings, are a recurring problem. Armed conflict persists in the territory, as does tight Indonesian military control over East Timor's population.

Given the dramatic loss of life in East Timor as a result of the fighting and 14-year occupation--acknowledged to total at least 100,000 persons out of an original population of less than 700,000—we wish to reiterate our support for measures to prevent further suffering for the people of East Timor. In particular, we believe that the United States should firmly support the continued presence in East Timor of international humanitarian organizations, as well as the efforts of human rights groups to obtain unrestricted access to the territory. International humanitarian organizations with existing programs in East Timor, and others that wish to initiate programs, should be allowed to provide expanded assistance and protection for the East Timorese, including political detainees and their relatives.

Other humanitarian matters warrant attention. A specific case is the orphanage in the town of Venilale, near an area of reported conflict, where sickness and malnutrition afflict the children. Nurses reportedly have refrained from visiting them because of Indonesian army interrogations over the whereabouts of the children's parents.

There appears to be a need for additional medical care and supplies in certain rural areas of the territory. Further, concern has been raised about Indonesia's birth control activities in East Timor in view of the large-scale loss of population there.

Finally, we call to your attention that the leader of East Timor's Catholic Church, Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, has sought the support of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for a referendum through which the people of East Timor could participate in the determination of their own future. The bishop's initiative is based on the view that a peaceful resolution of the conflict in East Timor, which is the source of much of the humanitarian need in the territory, should address the concerns and interests of the Timorese people themselves.

We would encourage you to support discussions with the United Nations, Indonesia, Portugal, and all interested parties, that seek to secure a just and lasting peace for the people of East Timor. At the same time, we acknowledge the constructive role Indonesia is playing in seeking an end to the occupation of Cambodia, and the many other political and strategic ties between our two countries. Our concern is that failure to mention the situation in East Timor during your meeting with President Suharto would signal a lack of United States attention to the serious human rights and humanitarian issues in that troubled territory.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Anthony C. Beilenson (D-Calif.)
Howard L. Berman (D-Calif.)
Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.)
George E. Brown Jr. (D-Calif.)
Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.)
Julian C. Dixon (D-Calif.)
Mervyn M. Dymally (D-Calif.)
Don Edwards (D-Calif.)
Vic Fazio (D-Calif.)
Augustus F. Hawkins (D-Calif.)
Tom Lantos (D-Calif.)
Mel Levine (D-Calif.)
Robert T. Matsui (D-Calif.)
Matthew G. Martinez (D-Calif.)
Leon E. Panetta (D-Calif.)
Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.)
Fortney H. Stark (D-Calif.)
Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.)
Ben Nighthorse Campbell (D-Colo.)
Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.)
Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.)
Bruce A. Morrison (D-Conn.)
Thomas R. Carper (D-Del.)
Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D.C.)
Dante B. Fascell (D-Fla.)
William Lehman (D-Fla.)

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Lane Evans (D-Ill.)
Charles A. Hayes (D-Ill.)
William O. Lipinski (D-Ill.)
John Edward Porter (R-Ill.)
John Hiler (R-Ind.)
Jim Jontz (D-Ind.)
Frank McCloskey (D-Ind.)
Thomas J. Tauke (R-Iowa)
Dan Glickman (D-Kans.)
Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.)
C. Thomas McMillen (D-Md.)
Constance A. Morella (R-Md.)
Chester G. Atkins (D-Mass.)
Silvio O. Conte (R-Mass.)
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Joseph P. Kennedy II (D- Mass.)
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Paul B. Henry (R-Mich.)
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David R. Obey (D-Wis.)

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